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# NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS

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## EGYPT

By FRANCES JACKSON BENNETT

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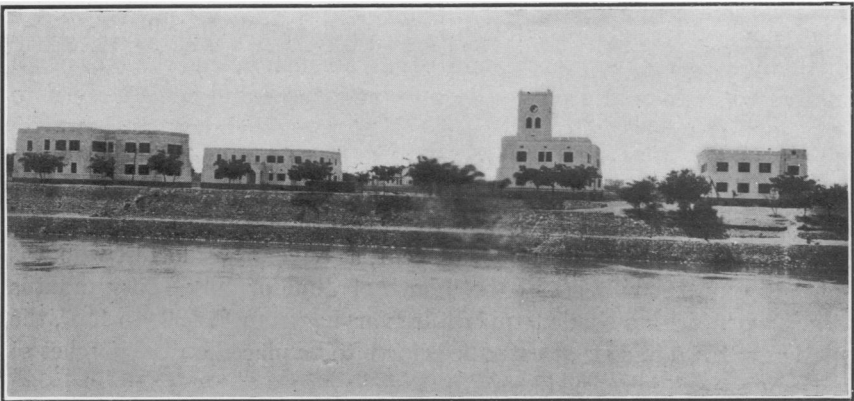
As each winter comes round, many and various are the visitors who from many lands pour into Egypt, anxious to visit her ancient cities and see for themselves the great and world-famed tombs and temples for which the land for many centuries has been noted. Nor are any ever disappointed for from Alexandria, with its catacombs, Pompey's Pillar, etc., to Assuan, with its islands and temple ruins, to say nothing of that modern marvel, the great and mighty dam, to which the Egypt of today owes her wealth and glory, the land abounds with interest. Yes, and for many she holds an interest of another, of a more spiritual sort, for from earliest times have not the peoples of Egypt been preëminently religious? Her very ruins are an answer to the question, for almost all that remain to the present day are those of temples, etc., dedicated to the pagan gods, the only gods with whom the ancient Egyptian seems to have been acquainted, and wonderful indeed were their ritual and beliefs. While the worship of these gods was still at its height, and men were everywhere prostrating themselves before them, a very commonplace thing occurred. A weary, travel-worn party of a man, a woman and a tiny child, passing over the Egyptian border, took refuge in her land. Yet that was in truth a mighty day for Egypt. Little did she then reckon that that tiny child would one day change the current of her thought, the character of her people.

Forty-five years later Egypt received another visitor. The little child had long since returned to his native land, had grown, had lived a life of spotless purity, and had died the death of a criminal, dying that others might live, and one of his followers, anxious to spread abroad the story of that matchless love, went down into Egypt there to proclaim the story of life through the cross of his Master. It is said that for several years St. Mark lived and labored in Egypt, where from the very first he seems to have found a willing hearing and, in his own life-time, had the joy of seeing many turn from heathen darkness and embrace the Light of Life. He became the first bishop of the Church (Coptic) of Egypt: that Church which only about 200 years later was to spread through the

whole Nile Valley, until Egypt became practically a Christian country, and to her early great thinkers and writers the Christian world of today owes much.

Saints Anthony, George and Athanasius whose memories we have learned to revere, were numbered among her sons, and from the great Christian School in Alexandria knowledge and learning were spread far and wide.

Assiut has more than once stood out as a religious center. As early as the third century it had its own bishop and we read that in 307 A.D., Meletius, bishop of Assiut, is accused of having caused schism in the Church by introducing "ritualistic observances of an unseemly character," and in other ways bringing the censure of the clergy upon himself,



COLLEGE BUILDINGS, ASSIUT, AMERICAN MISSION, TAKEN FROM THE NORTH BANK OF THE IBRAHEMIA CANAL

in-so-much that, at the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D., he was stripped of many privileges and allowed to retain but a nominal dignity; while the remains of monasteries in the mountains nearby point to the religious nature of its people.

However, as doubtless we all know, the Church of Egypt herself, as the centuries went by, weakened by heresy and schism within, and by terrible persecutions without, gradually lost her brightness until at the beginning of the last century her life was at a very low ebb. It was then that the western branches of Christ's Church arose to a sense of their responsibility and sent missionaries back to the land which had in earlier days inspired them. Thus the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Church Missionary Society, etc., of England, both had

the honor and joy of holding out helping hands to the people of the Land of the Nile.

About the year 1865, the American Mission, in spite of many difficulties, established a small school in Assiut, for which purpose, no other building being obtainable, it rented a donkey stable! As the years went by that school, by the blessing of God, grew until today it owns much land and several very fine buildings where almost 1000 boys and girls are daily taught and turned into educated, useful citizens. Anyone who is interested enough to study the wonderful history of these schools should read Dr. Watson's book, "The American Mission in Egypt."

Not the least interesting part of the work is that branch devoted to the healing of the sick. Almost twenty years ago, Dr. Henry commenced medical work in Assiut. In those days there were far fewer doctors in Egypt than there are today, and it was not always easy at first to get the people to trust him sufficiently to come to his clinics! However, little by little the work grew, until finally so many came that the small native house then in use proved quite inadequate and he cast about to see how he might widen his borders. It was several years, however, before he was able to build the present large hospital with its 150 beds, a hospital which is almost self-supporting and always growing, for as the years go by one notices a new room here, a new bit of land enclosed there, and yet it is still all so insufficient, as anyone would feel who was able to pay it a visit about the month of June or July—busy months those when, with a shade temperature varying from F. 100° to 110°, the patients crowd in so that extra beds have to be placed on the porches so that none need be turned away.

Numbers of major operations are performed, many having come to the hospital in pain and fear, with little or no hope, and having returned to their homes well and rejoicing.

Also, in the daily clinic, hundreds of poor men and women are treated. Of course the medical work is, as it should be, but a means to an end, the most earnest desire of every doctor being that while healing the illness of his many patients he may be used of God to bring health and comfort also to their sin-sick souls, and many we believe within the walls of the hospital have found that peace which the world cannot give neither indeed can it take away.